When Ideals Act as Boomerangs

May? 1938

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INTRO. "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".

It was this ideal of liberty which actuated the Colonial revolutionists and led them to break with the mother country and found for themselves the United States of America. Many of the first settlers in America came to this country for the sake of enjoying religious liberty. Others came because of visions of wealth and opportunity. The teachings of the Bible and the Declaration of Independence gave our forefathers the courage to write our constitution and set up a government for themselves.

And ever since our beginning we Americans have been visionaries and dreamers, no matter what others may say. Our rapid and extensive growth, our great wealth and our highly developed institutions are the result of dreams and ideals. But this is not the whole of our reaction to our visions. Much of the inequality and poverty and suffering of the present time is also the fruitage of the motives which prompted us to follow our gleams. The Civil War and the freeing of the slaves was brot about by the reaction of our ideal of liberty and freedom upon the minds of thinking Americans. The aspirations and dreams of self-seeking men have created the great business enterprises that now exist but also the economic situation which now prevails. The war between capital and labor is the result of two conflicting ideals, the one held by the working class and the other by the employers.

Many people today are utterly crushed by the very ideals which they have been holding. That which they believed would give them life and liberty and happiness has betrayed them, has acted as a boomerang leaving them worse off than they were before. And there is no disappointment in life greater than such reaction from an ideal. And undoubtedly at this very hour there are more

young men cherishing ideals which are destined to betray them and to poison their lives than every lived at any one time upon the earth.

Look at the Nazi youth of Germany! They have risen from the depths of despair in which the World War left them and have climbed to the heights of eagerness and enthusiasm in their abandonment of themselves to the hopes of the nazi regime. But the principles of that regime are bound, sooner or later, to come to grief and frustration. Think of the intolerable bitterness that will come to the youth of Germany when they realize that their ideals have betrayed them!

The same can be said of Soviet Russia. A new day, a new world has opened up to the people of Russia. A great social dream possesses them and they ~~think~~ believe that they are setting up the ultimate in government and social order. But when they once come face to face with the problems that are bound to arise because of the very principles of their economic utopia they will have to face a hard and angry disillusionment. Their very ideals will have betrayed them, and what a terrible betrayal that will be!

But we need not go further to Italy ~~and~~ or Japan to see the inevitable reaction of false ideals and of true ideals falsely held. We can return to our own country and see the same thing aplenty. ~~Think of~~ What of the thousands here in America who criticise keenly the faults and ills of our own situation but who uncritically and blindly ally themselves to various social dreams that are destined to failure and frustration! Practically all of such dreams when submitted to careful analysis reveal that they contain inner fordes of disintergration. Think of the effect upon their lives ~~will be~~ when they realize that their very dreams have betrayed them.

Then think of the many others in our country who hold to the ideal of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but who hold it for themselves only. They deny the same rights to others. Like the framers of our constitution and the adopters of our Declaration of Independence, they restrict the universal ideal to

to themselves only, and deny it to the rest of the citizens. And as the first group ~~laid the see~~ planted the seed of the Civil War because of their restrictions so these present-day self-centered reactionaries are planting th seeds of another terrible conflict. My prayer is that such seeds planted may never come to fruitage.

There are many who look upon the ideal of ~~rights~~ universal rights and liberties as set forth in the Declaration of Independence as humanly impossible of realization and consequently of little value to humanity. The same may be said of the ideal of Jesus for the world. One God, one Father of us all, one brotherhood of man with all racial, national and religious distinctions subordinated to God's rule over all, is an ideal that seemingly is impossible for this world and so far from realization that it seems useless to strive to make it come true. Yes, from the merely human point of view it is an impossible dream, but from the standpoint of universal reality and necessity it is the only ultimate objective worth striving for. It is the will of God for His children of earth. When we learn to cooperate with God and His universal forces we shall make more rapid progress ~~in~~ toward its realization.

All things are possible with God. Jesus who gave to the world its one outstanding universal ideal for right living, individually and collectively, himself lived in accordance with it. His life and conduct, his teachings and works, his redemptive death and his continuing to live in ever increasing influence in the world bear ample testimony to the truth of this claim. And what Jesus did by giving himself wholly to God and cooperating with God in every way, every person living may also do. There are individuals today who are largely so living. They have overcome racial prejudice, nationalism, religious prejudice and intolerance and are working for the good of all humanity. To cite but one example. E. Stanley Jones learned thru his years of experience in India that what the world needs is not western civilization, not western churches and ecclesiasticism, not ~~western~~

western customs and manners and learning, not even the O. T. of the Bible ~~from Genesis to Revelation~~, but just one thing- Jesus Christ, his spirit and his ideal of universal justice, good will, and love.

Our own national ideal of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is the outgrowth of and in keeping with the ideal of Jesus for the world. Both ideals belong to all mankind and we as Americans have no more right to them than any other people on the face of the earth. Not only so, but by their very nature in their inclusiveness and universality we are under obligation to share them with all the world. We cannot be true to them and let the rest of the world alone in regard to them. Politically, it may be wise for us at the present time to stay home and mind our business, to keep out of international entanglements. But when it comes to our ideals of democracy and Christianity which represent the best we have and which are not exclusively ours, we should do all in our power to make them known among all peoples.

"A cigarette in the mouth of every Chinese man, woman and child in ten years" has been the slogan of a great tobacco company. "Open a school-girl's desk, and you will find on top of her books a movie magazine with pictures of Hollywood stars" was not said by a high school principal in the United States, but by the principal of a girl's high school in Bagdad, Mesopotania. When my daughter went to Bethel Alaska to teach, the first thing the Esquimo students wanted her to tell about was Hollywood. Business enterprise does all in its power to create a demand for its wares in all parts of the world. Why, then, should we leave ~~them~~ others alone with our best? How can we let them alone and be true to what we believe? To let them alone is to localize our ideals, and to localize our ideals is to deny them. There is nothing local about Jesus, either in his teachings, his spirit or his example. The spirit of Jesus belongs to the whole world, and so does the spirit of our ideal of democracy.